DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 222 IR 052 573

AUTHOR Li, Tze-chung
TITLE The Future of American Library Education--Return to Basics?
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on Library and Information Science Education (Taipei, Taiwan, November 29-30, 1985).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Design; Higher Education; Information Processing; *Information Science; Library Administration; *Library Education; Library Schools; *Library Science; *Professional Recognition

ABSTRACT

American library schools are confronted by the problems of declining enrollment, changing modern technologies, and a shrinking market for their graduates. The extension of courses to include information science is a welcome direction, although it seems to reflect a lack of confidence in the traditional library science education. For librarianship to continue as a viable, respected profession, library schools must return to basics: knowledge of subject contents, the teaching role of librarians, and information processing. Although library schools may develop information science programs stressing managerial aspects along side the traditional library science program in order to expand the market for their graduates, the current hybrid program, by mixing information science and library science, may well undermine the foundation and role of American librarianship. (36 end notes) (Author/EW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED3012222

國立臺灣大學舉辦
圖書館學與資訊科學教育國際研討會

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION

November 29-30, 1985
NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN LIBRARY EDUCATION — RETURN TO BASICS?

Tze-chung Li
Dean and Professor
Rosary College Graduate School of Library
and Information Science
River Forest, Illinois, USA

IR052573

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Tze-Chung Li
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

國立台灣大學圖書館學系暨研究所
DEPARTMENT AND GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF LIBRARY SCIENCE, N.T.U.
Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C. Tel:(02)396-2859 ; 351-0231 Ext. 2296

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN LIBRARY EDUCATION - RETURN TO BASICS?

Tze-chung Li, Dean and Professor, Rosary College Graduate School of lbrary and Information Science, River Forest, Illinois, U.S.A.

American library schools are having a difficult time. They are confronted by the problems of declining enrollment, changing modern technologies, and a shrinking market for their graduates. From 1979 to 1983, the number of students enrolled in library science master's degree programs dropped from 9,180 to 8,139, a decrease of 12.8 percent.[1] Take Rosary, for example. Its library school has been able to maintain a stable enrollment since 1982, but that enrollment is less than half of what it was in the peak year of 1972 when 449 students were enrolled in one semester. The over-all decrease in enrollment has already claimed casualties among library schools.

Changing modern technologies have had a serious impact on library operations. Practically all librarians are required to have basic knowledge of, and skills in, the library application of modern technologies. In talking about information technology and the traditional library, De Gennaro stated that library objectives must, among other things, include the implementation of an integrated system with an online catalog and appropriate internal and external network interface, as well as access to resources elsewhere by means of modern technologies.[2] Library science curricula must incorporate the use of modern technologies or library functions may be lost to other units that can provide the

same information more efficiently and effectively.[3]

Enrollment is directly proportional to the market. American colleges and universities conferred a total of 3,979 master's degrees in library science in 1982/83, a significant decrease of 42 percent in five years and 48 percent in 10 years.[4] The library market which can use library science graduates each year is estimated to be 110,000.[5] It is further constrained by the fact that many professional positions in libraries are not filled by library science graduates. For instance, some 30 percent of the federal library professionals at all levels did not have a master's degree in library science.[6]

A thriving market for library science graduates exists outside of libraries. The business sector alone has over 4 million corporations of which 160,000 are listed in the Million Dollar Directory.[7] The corporations listed in the directory, including the top 50,000 companies with net worth exeeding $1.85 million each, transact over two-thirds of the national volume of sales and employ 40 percent of all workers in the United States. If library schools can exploit this market by teaching their students in the management of information, employment opportunities for library science graduates may double.

Library schools are now struggling for survival and aggressively looking in new directions for vitality. One noticeable direction is the extension of their programs to information science at both undergraduate and graduate levels. From 1979 to 1983, while the number of graduate students in library science is down, the number of undergraduates in library and information science has increased substantially, from 1,290 to 2,349, a

comfortable jump of 82 percent.[8]

With the scope of the program broadened to include information science, new courses not existing in the 1960s, such as database management, microcomputers, programming languages, and online searching, have been developed and integrated into the regular library science curriculum. A comparison of 1976 and 1982 course offerings indicates a substantial increase of course offerings in these five categories: library automation, information storage and retrieval, systems analysis, interactive computer systems, and programming.[9] To underscore the new directions, many library schools have changed their titles. Of the 56 ALA accredited library schools, 27 use "information science," 12 "information studies," and 5 "educational/instructional technology," "information service," and "information management," respectively.[10]

To justify this movement toward the information science field, Daniel identifies three types of information worlds: literature, document, and machine-readable data.[11] The world of libraries and archives deals with knowledge in recorded form and it focuses on the historical time frame and the book/periodical storage medium. The second world is represented by paper-work or records centers. The last refers to computers, telecommunications, and automated information systems dealing often with numerical information. These three worlds, according to Daniel, can be brought together organizationally and the new breed of librarians must penetrate into the third world. As stated emphatically by Fosdick, information science is now critical to

library science education.[12] The significance of developing information science courses is two-fold: to help produce a "new breed of librarians" and to enable library science graduates to seek employment in other sectors, such as the information industry.

It must be noted, however, that this change of direction comes not from the strength but the weakness of library schools. The juxtaposition of library science and information science courses and the recent movement toward information science, though not a desperate strategy, show diminishing confidence in the foundation and role of traditional librarianship.

In commemoration of the Special Libraries Association's 75th anniversary, the Association's Illinois Chapter produced Information and Special Libraries in 2009.[13] Fifty-six contributors expressed their views, noting the changes in the library profession caused by technological developments. The bottom line is that librarianship, having its roots in tradition, deals not simply with media but with messages in the media. Knowledge of the subject matter of the messages is essential to providing effective library services.

For the effective use of government publications, for instance, a basic knowledge of government structure and functions is required. Vertrees and Murfin reported that students learned more by studying not only government publications but also the legislative process, including the relationship between Congress and the President and the executive branch agencies.[14] In the use of legal resources, McCallum suggested that "essential to helping a library user find the law is some understanding of what

constitutes the law."[15] It is preferable that an area bibliographer have first-hand knowledge of the area.[16] Obviously, the ability to handle information resources in a discipline is largely dependent on how thorough the librarian's knowledge of that field is, regardless of what form the sources are in -- electronic, paperless, or optical.

Historically, the development of three literature courses in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences was intended to stress the contents of subject disciplines. These courses, as mentioned by Shove, are "to provide a knowledge and understanding of the basic ideas, concepts, objectives, and current trends in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences."[17] Linderman supported this view stating "there seems to be a distinct advantage in the literature course which, in studying any one subject, such as Sociology or Political Science, considers at the same time the development of the discipline, the classic writing in the field. . . ."[18]

According to the INFROSS (Investigation into Information Requirements of the Social Sciences) survey, social scientists tended to underuse the services of librarians. This was said to be the most significant finding of the survey.[19] A scientist spent four hours repeating an experiment, but, in fact, only thirty-six minutes were required for a librarian to locate the information.[20] In these cases, users did not delegate their research activities -- including bibliographic searching -- to librarians. They may not be aware of the availability of library services or they may not have confidence in the librarian's

ability to find information. The latter possibility should move library schools to seriously reevaluate their programs.

Librarians have in general a distinctive role to play. American librarianship has progressed through at least three stages of development, from bookmen to technicians and from technicians to professionals. An important force in the development has been the teaching role of librarians. In 1876, the Bureau of Education stated that librarians should not only understand their primary duties as purveyers of library supplies to the people, but should also realize their high privileges and responsibilities as teachers.[21] This concept was further explored by John Cotton Dana, reiterated by William S. Learned, and strongly advocated by Alvin Johnson.[22] Johnson's advocacy had particular significance in the 1930s when the adult education movement reached its highest pitch.

Since the 1960s, however, the importance of the librarians' teaching role has shifted to the informational function. To some, the real future of library service lies in the direct provision of information; instructing the user in the technique of information-searching is an important, but secondary, goal and is not necessarily a reference function.[23] It is encouraging to see the recent array of advocates for the librarians' teaching role.

In response to A Nation at Risk, a report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education,[24] the Department of Education produced Alliance in Excellence, stressing skill and proficiency in finding and using information effectively, a function in which libraries play an essential role.[25] It considers libra-

ries to be an integral part of the overall educational system and consequently "the librarian must be considered an educator as well as a librarian."[26] The American Library Association also responded with a statement noting, in particular, the teaching role of librarians.[27] "Librarians are teachers, and they serve both students and teachers."[28] The reaffirmation of the teaching role of librarians makes it clear that they should have knowledge of subject fields as well as of information technology.

Present library education tends to stress skill and proficiency in providing information as it is. Familiar teaching modes, such as treasure hunting and pathfinders, rarely teach students to process information into more useful information. Rush defines information processing as "the manipulation of data so as to reveal or highlight salient characteristics, features or properties of data, or relationships among various data elements or classes of data elements," and criticizes library schools for not teaching such a process.[29] It will be hard, without subject knowledge, for students to work effectively on even simple information processes, such as distinguishing various information pros and cons available on a subject, choosing the most appropriate sources of information, and interpreting the information so as to make it more useful to patrons. Although the undergraduate program mentioned earlier may make the FTE more presentable in the budgeting process, it doesn't offer a sufficient background in the liberal arts and sciences. nor does it offer a subject concentration, so it is not the kind of program with which library schools should educate professionals.

Developing information science courses is essential to strengthen traditional library science. Library science education must be "state-of-the-art technologically."[30] New courses are particularly important if library schools intend to expand their market to any sector other than libraries. Library science students are now required to take courses in traditional library science and also courses in modern information science. It is, however, not feasible for any student to grasp well both fields in one year's studies, the general program structure of most library schools. The result will be that students take fewer courses in traditional library science and receive a superficial education in information science.

One solution is to prolong the period of study as some library schools have already done. The problem is that the extended period of study will not make the graduates more marketable in the library profession.[31] If one year's curriculum is adequate for entering the library profession, why do we need a two years' program? It would be more useful, however, to extend the period devoted to studying the subject content of a discipline.

The relationship between library science and information science is similar to that between library science and business administration. These programs may enrich each other, yet each has its distinctive purpose. Many library schools offer courses geared toward business administration, such as personnel management and managerial finance. They are useful, but not essential to librarians, simply because library schools educate librarians, not business managers. Likewise, courses in information science

are useful, such as database management, programming languages, and systems analysis, but librarians can function competently without having studied them. A survey of eight groups of libraries revealed that courses in traditional library science are essential to anyone who wishes to be hired.[32] Courses in library automation, computer programming, and systems analysis and design are generally considered desirable but not essential.[33] A survey of the largest public library systems on library competencies has a similar finding, though some computer-related courses are considered essential in the future.[34] According to a survey of Rosary graduates from 1980 to 1984, only 27 of the 106 respondents consider computer programming a necessary competence for librarians.[35]

The hybrid program, mixing library science and information science, may not result in a bonanza. It can very well adversely affect the foundation and role of librarianship. The future of American library science education does not lie in mere application of modern technologies, but in returning to basics to strengthen traditional library science. Emphasis must be placed on the knowledge of the subject discipline required of librarians. Rush has criticized current library and information science education because "courses deal with media, but not with messages," and "courses deal with sources but not their content."[36]

To make librarianship a viable, respected profession, library schools must restore confidence in traditional library science, stress the librarian's competence in using resources

effectively, and reaffirm the librarian's teaching role. They must chart a course for the future of library education in the following directions. First, stress the importance of knowing subject content and see to it that students are taught to process information as well as to provide it. Second, reaffirm the distinctive functions of librarians, with particular reference to their teaching role in most types of libraries. Third, integrate information science courses into traditional library science courses. If there is a need for separate courses, they should be developed in such a way that they do not encroach upon library science education. Fourth, develop a full-fledged information science program, stressing managerial aspects. This should exist side by side with the library science program, and should aim at producing a different professional species.

FOOTNOTES

1. Association of American Library Schools. Library Education Statistical Report, 1980-1982; Association for Library and Information Science Education. Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report, 1982-1984.

2. Richard De Gennaro, "Shifting Gears: Information Technology and the Traditional Libary." A lecture delivered at the University of Pittsburgh, 1983, pp. 9-11.

3. JoAnn Segal and John Tyson, "The Library's Changing Role in Higher Education," Library Journal 110 (1985): 45.

4. "Fact-file: Degrees Conferred by U. S. Colleges and Universities, 1982-83," The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 9, 1985, p. 22.

5. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science documents released on May 22, 1985.

6. John Berry, "New Threats to the MLS?" Library Journal 110(5) (1985): 23-4.

7. "Introduction," Million Dollar Directory (1985).

8. See note 1.

9. Howard Fosdick, "Trends in Information Science Education," Special Libraries 75(4) (1984): 301.

10. Graduate Library Education Programs, October 1985. Chicago: American Library Association.

11. Evelyn Daniel, "1980's Forecast: Special Librarian to Information Manager," Special Libraries 73(2) (1982): 97-98.

12. Howard Fosdick, "Trends in Information Science Education," Special Libraries 75(4) (1984): 292-302.

13. Special Libraries Association. Illinois Chapter. Information and Special Libraires in 2009: Informed Speculations. Chicago: Special Libraries Association Illinois Chapter, 1984.

14. Robert L. Vertress and Majorie E. Murfin, "Teaching the Legislative Process: An Evaluation of Classroom and Library Instruction and a Legislative History Exercise," Government Publications Review 7A (1980): 505-7.

15. Sue Vest McCallum, "Legal Research for Non-law Librarians," Government Publications Review, 6 (1979): 264.

16. Beverly J. Brewster, "Area Bibliography Programs in U. S. Library Schools," International Library Review 9 (Jan. 1977): 8.

17. Raymond H. Shove, "Objectives of Adult Literature Course and Their Place in the Library School Curriculum," in Association of American Library Schools, Report of Meeting, Minneapolis, June 24,

1954, p. 46.

18. Winifred B. Linderman, "Changes in the Literature Courses in the New Library School Programs," in Association of American Library Schools, Report of Meeting, Minneapolis, June 24, 1954, p. 49.

19. Maurice B. Line, "The Information Uses and Needs of Social Scientists: An Overview of INFROSS," Aslib Proceedfings 23 (1971): 416.

20. Albert H. Rubenstein and others, "Search Versus Experiment - the Role of the Research Librarian," College and Research Libraries 34 (1973): 280-8.

21. U. S., Bureau of Education, Public Libraries in the United States of America (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), p. xi.

22. John Cotton Dana, A Library Primer (1896); William S. Learned, The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge (1924); Alvin Johnson. The Public Library; A People's University (1938).

23. Anita Shiller, "Reference Service: Instruction or Information," Library Quarterly 35 (1965): 52-60.

24. National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk; The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983); National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Annual Report, 1983-84 (1985), pp. 13-7.

25. U. S. Department of Education, Alliance for Excellence; Librarians Respond to A Nation at Risk (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1984).

16. Ibid., p. 4.

27. American Library Association, Task Force on Excellence in Education, Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1984).

28. Ibid, p. 4.

29. James E. Rush, "The Challenge of Educating Library and Information Science Professionals: 1985 and Beyond," Technical Services Quarterly 3(1 and 2) (1985): 97.

30."A Conversation with Tom Galvin," Technicalities 4(11) (1984): 4.

31. Statistical Data From Questionaires Collected by Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, n.d.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Nathan M. Smith and others, "The Public Library Director's View of Library Education," School of Library and Information Science, Brigham Young University, n.d.

35. "Alumni Questionnaire, 1980-1984." Rosary College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1985. Unpublished.

36. James E. Rush, "The Challenge of Educating Library and Information Science Professionals: 1985 and Beyond," Technical Services Quarterly 3(1 & 2) (1985): 102.